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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 47th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Administrative and financial arrangements regarding the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (continued) (A/46/7/Add.9; A/C.5/46/23)

1. Mr. TEMEL (Turkey) said that his delegation strongly supported the international drug control activities for the biennium referred to in paragraphs 22 to 25 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/46/23), and believed that the proposed administrative and financial arrangements for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) would improve the implementation of both the existing and the new mandates in that area.

2. Drug abuse and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs were a threat to all countries, and international cooperation was essential to deal with them. During the last few years some effective steps had been taken to interdict international illicit drug trafficking, and his Government attached great importance to the activities to be carried out by UNDCP. Turkey had long cooperated with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the International Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, and regarded their integrated role as essential in the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking. It was its view that the administrative and financial requirements of the Programme should be fully met in order to increase its efficiency and effectiveness.

3. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, said that under General Assembly resolution 45/179, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs was the principal United Nations policy-making body for drug control questions and under Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/38 the Commission was responsible for providing policy guidance to UNDCP and monitoring its activities. In addition, the Commission would be empowered to carry out the functions specified under rule 9 of the draft financial rules annexed to the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/46/23). The States members of the European Community considered that it would be appropriate for the Commission to examine those matters at its next session, as well as the administrative structures of the drug control programme, taking into account, inter alia, the recommendations made in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/46/7/Add.9).

4. The Secretary-General's previously stated intention to delegate authority for the Fund of UNDCP had been confirmed in his report. In that context, it should be pointed out that while managerial flexibility in itself was welcome, it should also be relevant, contribute to efficiency and be consistent with United Nations personnel policy. The conversion of the post of Executive

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

Director to permanent status should take place within the procedural framework provided for in General Assembly resolution 41/213. It was also urgent to take action to fill the vacant extrabudgetary posts as quickly as possible.

5. The European Community supported paragraph 16 of the Advisory Committee's report and agreed that the Executive Director should be responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Fund and presenting them to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Board of Auditors and the General Assembly. It assumed that that procedure would imply that future reports of the Advisory Committee on the Fund of UNDCP would also be addressed to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

6. Ms. FOGH (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the General Assembly's decision in 1990 to establish a single drug control programme had been an essential step towards enabling the United Nations to take the leading role in the international struggle against narcotic drugs. Although the Advisory Committee viewed the organizational structure proposed in the Secretary-General's report as unrealistic, the Nordic countries assumed that the Secretary-General took the Advisory Committee's views into consideration in his continuing efforts to rationalize the administrative structure of the Programme. Since the establishment of the Programme, the focus had been on organizing and structuring its work. The Nordic countries were convinced that it would now fully concentrate its activities on mobilizing the United Nations system and the world community for concerted action against narcotic drugs, and looked forward to reports on those activities at the next meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

7. The Nordic delegations shared the view expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 4 of its report that the question of the governance of the Programme was not clear. They doubted, however, that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would be able to approve the UNDCP operational programme and administrative budget and ensure their implementation. They therefore believed that the question of governance must be further investigated and discussed. UNDCP needed managerial flexibility to discharge its functions effectively. Decisions must now be taken in order to simplify appointments and promotions of staff in the Programme, as well as to establish appropriate management of the proposed Fund, trust funds and other financial matters.

8. One of the reasons for the establishment of UNDCP had been to make better use of existing resources. Before additional posts were added to the Programme, existing structures should be consolidated. The Nordic delegations considered it important that the General Assembly take a decision at the current session enabling UNDCP to begin immediately to fulfil its operative functions, bearing in mind that further discussion of the question of governance would be needed.

9. Ms. BEULIEU (Canada) said her delegation believed that it was necessary to take a decision on the administrative and financial arrangements for UNDCP at the current session. At the preceding session the Secretary-General had been requested to consolidate the United Nations drug structures under an Under-Secretary-General. In addition, the resolution adopted by the Third Committee earlier in the current session had laid down broad political guidelines for the Programme. The Fifth Committee would be remiss in its duty if it delayed a decision on the item. The Secretary-General, in his report, had stressed that in view of the magnitude of the Programme and the distinctive features of the proposed Fund, there was a need to establish separate Financial Rules and, where necessary, exceptions to the Financial Regulations of the United Nations. Those rules must be established now as a starting-point in order to enable the Programme to function.

10. The Secretary-General had also proposed that the temporary post of the Executive Director be made permanent and that the General Assembly adopt special rules relating to personnel. Those proposals were more than reasonable given the nature and high priority of the Programme, particularly since they were in conformity with the recommendations of the Group of Experts which had formed the basis for the Assembly's 1990 decision. Although the Advisory Committee, in its report, had raised some important questions, it had not opposed any of the Secretary-General's recommendations. Her delegation therefore saw no reason to delay taking a decision on the question.

11. Mr. GREGG (Australia) said his delegation agreed that it was essential that a decision be taken at the current session so that UNDCP could begin its activities as soon as possible.

12. Mr. RAE (India) said that his delegation supported the Programme and was in favour of providing the Executive Director with adequate managerial and administrative flexibility. The question was how much flexibility was required, and whether the present financial regulations and rules hampered such flexibility. His delegation was not now convinced that that was the case, but would be willing to reconsider its position if it were persuaded that some rules created difficulties. The same was true with respect to its position on the question of a separate personnel policy. The Advisory Committee, in paragraph 4 of its report, referred to the same question and pointed out that it was not clear whether the policy guidance given by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs extended to operational activities. That was an issue which needed to be discussed and on which the General Assembly should take a decision, whether in the Fifth Committee or in another subsidiary body. In any case, his delegation could agree that the Commission's authority should extend to operational activities on condition that none of its powers were delegated to any of its subsidiary bodies or organs.

13. In connection with paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal that the totality of resources, both regular and extrabudgetary, made available to the Programme would be shown, but would like to have a separate indication of how the activities financed from the two different sources of funding were allocated.

(Mr. Rae, India)

14. His delegation also agreed with the Advisory Committee that the structure proposed by the Secretary-General seemed somewhat cumbersome and unwieldy and that some of the proposed units and offices should be merged. It would like the Secretary-General to undertake a review of that question and to report on his conclusions to the General Assembly either at the next session or when the current session resumed in 1992.

15. An important aspect of the Programme's work should be the matter of licit opiates. His delegation would wish to be assured by the Executive Director that that question would be dealt with and to be given information on where it would be included in the Programme's proposed structure as well as what activities the Executive Director would initiate to deal with it.

16. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's proposals in paragraph 17 of his report on the matter of additional posts, but would like to know what the present vacancy situation was in respect of the Programme. It would also like clarification of how the Fund for UNDCP could be governed by the same Financial Regulations as the Organization as a whole while having different Financial Rules.

17. Mrs. TAHIR-KHELI (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General's proposals in his report (A/C.5/46/23) represented significant progress towards implementation of the decision taken in 1990 by the General Assembly to create a new United Nations drug control programme and structure. The Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7/Add.9) provided the Committee with additional information on the issues involved. Although in several instances the Advisory Committee had been unable to reach specific conclusions and recommendations, the Fifth Committee would nevertheless be required to take decisive action at the current session in order to ensure full implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly beginning in 1992. Her delegation looked forward to working with all others in resolving outstanding issues so as to provide the Executive Director with a workable and coherent set of guidelines to ensure that the expressed will of the Assembly was carried out.

18. The Secretary-General had proposed a number of changes in the financial and personnel regulations of the Programme. Those changes did not, however, constitute a significant departure from those applied to other United Nations programmes, such as UNDP, UNHCR and UNRWA, which derived the bulk of their resources from voluntary contributions. What was necessary was to ensure that the drug programme had the necessary flexibility to ensure that activities were carried out efficiently and effectively.

19. The Third Committee draft resolution on narcotic drugs (A/C.3/46/L.33), adopted by consensus, provided the basis for addressing many of the detailed aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals. In paragraph 9 of that draft resolution, the Third Committee had recommended that the Assembly endorse the Secretary-General's proposal to place the financial resources of the existing

(Mrs. Tahir-Kheli, United States)

United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control under the direct responsibility of the Executive Director of UNDCP as a fund for financing operational activities. The General Assembly's adoption of the Third Committee's draft resolution would legally establish that Fund. The Fifth Committee must decide on the financial regulations governing the Fund at the current session to ensure that programmes could continue in 1992.

20. The Secretary-General's proposed personnel regulations constituted an essential step towards the decentralized management of the Programme. Her delegation supported the establishment of a separate appointment and promotion board for the Programme in order to ensure that personnel decisions were handled expeditiously. While it was essential to ensure that personnel decisions were fair, procedures that delayed appointments and thereby undermined the Programme's effectiveness were unacceptable.

21. Her delegation also supported the specific proposals contained in paragraphs 10 to 16 of the Secretary-General's report, and noted in that context that the Advisory Committee's comments might not fully reflect the desire of Member States that the Executive Director be delegated a degree of authority in personnel matters. Her delegation believed that such authority was necessary and was consistent with the political agreements reached in 1990 and at the current session regarding the functioning of UNDCP. It also supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the post of Executive Director at the Under-Secretary-General level on a permanent basis, which should be approved at the current session.

22. UNDCP should be provided with sufficient resources to carry out mandated activities. The increase in staffing approved at the Assembly's forty-fifth session had been required in order to cope with the Programme's new responsibilities. Should additional regular budget staffing be required in the future, her delegation would support such increases on the understanding that new posts would be provided through redeployment. The Secretary-General did, however, recommend the establishment of four new extrabudgetary posts. While her delegation appreciated the Advisory Committee's concerns, it had noted that neither the Advisory Committee nor the Fifth Committee had taken decisions on extrabudgetary posts for other United Nations programmes, and would appreciate some clarification regarding the Advisory Committee's recommendation in the matter at hand. Again, it did not believe decisions on creation of posts funded from extrabudgetary resources were a matter for General Assembly action.

23. Her delegation considered the new administrative structure proposed by the Secretary-General to be an important first step towards reorganization of the United Nations drug control efforts. It noted the Advisory Committee's concerns, but expected that the Executive Director would keep the possible problems under review and propose additional changes if necessary to ensure that administrative costs were held to a minimum.

(Mrs. Tahir-Kheli, United States)

24. The reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee also dealt with the role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in overseeing UNDCP activities and resources. In that connection, it should be noted that the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had decided that the Commission was the principal United Nations policy-making body for drug control issues. The Commission's important policy-making and monitoring functions should not be weakened by micro-management of specific projects. Her delegation was concerned that some of the Financial Rules proposed by the Secretary-General might lead in that direction. It expected that those rules would be refined in future to fully reflect the relevant intergovernmental decisions and that future sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would address those important issues and take the necessary decisions.

25. Her delegation recognized that a number of critical issues remained to be resolved. Despite its heavy workload, the Fifth Committee must take the necessary action at the current session. It must also ensure that the decisions it took respected the policy guidance provided by the Third Committee. Given the technical nature of some of the issues, her delegation believed that interested delegations should hold informal consultations with a view to working out a draft decision which could be approved by consensus prior to the Committee's current deadline.

26. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that his delegation agreed with the general thrust of the Advisory Committee's comments in its report (A/46/7/Add.9) on the question of the role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and also agreed with other delegations that informal discussions of the matter might be helpful. It also agreed with the Indian delegation that the structure proposed by the Secretary-General for UNDCP seemed unrealistic and felt that further rationalization was required in order to ensure the optimum use of available resources for programme implementation. It therefore fully endorsed paragraph 7 of the Advisory Committee's report.

27. A number of delegations had referred to the apparent duplication involved in the Secretary-General's proposed structuring of the administrative, financial and personnel areas. That matter was also referred to in paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report. His delegation remained of the view that in those areas the existing United Nations rules should be given priority consideration. On the matter of staffing, while his delegation would continue to support proposals that would strengthen the Programme, it felt that at the present stage the posts already approved by the General Assembly must first be filled. It also considered that any strengthening of the Programme should not be limited to its headquarters' staff; in that connection, the Secretary-General should make specific recommendations for strengthening the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which would clearly have an important role to play in implementing the Programme in its region.

28. Miss SHITAKHA (Kenya) expressed her delegation's reservations concerning interference by the Third Committee in matters falling within the competence of the Fifth Committee and said that she hesitated to endorse the unprecedented degree of autonomy accorded to the Programme. She was also concerned that the UNDP personnel policies might not be consistent with United Nations policies and, in connection with paragraph 13 of the Advisory Committee's report, she agreed with the representative of Uganda that no further posts should be created until those already authorized had been filled.

29. She was concerned that the Advisory Committee had been unable to reach firm conclusions, thus making it difficult for the Fifth Committee to take a decision. She wanted to know what decisions, if any, the Committee needed to take at the present time. Her own delegation would prefer to defer the question, but, if a decision had to be taken, she supported the suggestion by the representative of India that the Secretary-General should be asked to submit a review of the proposed structure to the Fifth Committee at its next or resumed session.

30. Mr. FONTAINE (Cuba) said that one important question had not been resolved, namely, the degree of autonomy to be accorded to the Programme. The lack of agreement on that issue was a problem and clear guidelines were needed from the Third Committee. In that connection, he regretted the interference by the Third Committee in the Fifth Committee's work and recalled that resolution 45/248 had expressed concern over that matter. He wanted to know what steps the Secretariat had taken in response to the General Assembly's request to demarcate the spheres of competence of the Main Committees concerned.

31. Clarification was also needed as to the role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs: should it only provide general guidelines or was it also empowered to supervise and control the operational and administrative budgets of the Programme? That question needed to be settled before a final decision could be taken. A decision was also needed on whether to convert the Executive Director's post from a temporary to a permanent one. Although resolution 45/248 had requested the Secretary-General to report on measures to strengthen the United Nations Office at Vienna, no report had yet been submitted. He wanted to know what measures the Secretary-General intended to propose to that end.

32. He shared the views expressed by the Advisory Committee concerning the organizational structure, the Financial Rules and the Staff Rules, but felt that despite the shortage of time decisions were needed on other matters that had not been dealt with by the Advisory Committee. Finally, he supported the proposal made by the representative of Uganda that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean should be strengthened. That was particularly important given the magnitude of the drug problem in his own country and in the Latin American region as a whole.

33. Mr. DUHAULT (Mexico) said that, in his opinion, the concerns voiced by many delegations did not constitute an objection to the proper flexibility needed if the Programme was to fulfil its tasks, but were rather requests for the further substantiation of the need for the measures proposed by the Secretary-General. He hoped that the Chairman would be able to fund appropriate mechanisms for clearing up the concerns regarding finance, staffing and the structure of the Programme so that a decision could be taken at the current session. He supported the view expressed by the representative of Sweden that action must be taken on the Programme now, even if some issues remained unclear, so that its activities could be launched as soon as possible and with the necessary flexibility.

34. Mr. GOMEZ (Dominican Republic) said there were two aspects to the problem: the political aspect relating to the role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the administrative aspect relating to the United Nations Secretariat. On the latter question, he noted that, although the Advisory Committee had agreed to the establishment of new posts for drug control activities, many of those posts had not been filled. His delegation supported the constructive suggestions made by other delegations and felt that a decision must be taken on the administrative aspects of the Programme.

35. Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea) said that the Secretariat should take note of the problem posed by the respective roles of the Fifth Committee, and the other Main Committees with a view to delineating the specific functions of the Fifth Committee in order to avoid duplication of work.

36. Mr. FORAN (Acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), in reply to the question raised by the representative of Kenya, said that it was essential to take a decision at the current session in order to avoid losing momentum, since the Programme was due to become operational in January 1992. He agreed that the degree of autonomy to be granted to the Programme was of vital importance and felt that it would be useful to follow the usual practice of linking autonomy to the source of funding. He himself felt that, in view of the level of funding from the regular budget, the Programme should be semi-autonomous and he urged the Committee to give serious consideration to the Secretary-General's recommendations on the basis of the proposals made by the Advisory Committee. He agreed with the Advisory Committee that the structure needed to be streamlined and thought that delegating authority to the Executive Director for the administration of staff rules and financial matters would be good for the recruitment and retention of staff.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that he did not think the Committee was ready to take a decision on the matter at the current juncture and he therefore asked the representatives of Sweden and Mexico to coordinate informal consultations between the delegations concerned with a view to producing an agreed text for the consideration of the Committee as a whole.

Revised estimates under section 6: Special political questions (continued) (A/46/7/Add.13 and A/46/16; A/C.5/46/39)

38. Mrs. SIMON (Vanuatu) said that, although there were still as many Non-Self-Governing Territories as in 1986, there had been a steady reduction in the posts and resources provided for dealing with the situation of such Territories. Since the biennium 1986-1987, the total number of posts had declined from 128 to 26 and suggestions that the number should be reduced still further were incomprehensible to her delegation, particularly during the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In addition, the decolonization bodies had shown remarkable restraint in their spending, having used only 50 per cent of their allocation in 1984 and 37.6 per cent in 1989. In the light of the above considerations, her delegation believed that any further reductions in staff or budget appropriations were unjustifiable.

39. Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that by declaring the period 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the General Assembly had demonstrated its commitment to the continuation of the decolonization process and the need to complete that process within a reasonable time-frame. However, although the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories had remained the same since 1984, the resources allocated to the sector had declined from 1.3 per cent of the regular budget in the biennium 1984-1985 to 0.16 per cent in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. Those figures spoke for themselves and, as the Secretary-General had concluded in his report (A/C.5/46/39), further reductions could not be justified.

40. His delegation could not understand the reservations expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 13 of its report (A/46/7/Add.13). He called on the committee fully to endorse the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report and said that, if the problems of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were to be solved, the necessary resources had to be provided under section 6.

41. Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea) remarked that it had become customary to hear in the Fifth Committee that the decolonization process was over, that the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were satisfied with their fate and that the United Nations should no longer spend its efforts and resources on that issue. Indeed, the resource allocation for decolonization activities had decreased steadily over the past six years, from 1.3 per cent of the regular budget in the 1986-1987 biennium to a proposed 0.16 per cent for 1992-1993, and the Committee for Programme and Coordination had requested revised estimates for the subprogramme "Trusteeship and decolonization", the undeclared objective being a further reduction of resources. The report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/46/39, para. 20) showed, however, that the workload was likely to increase in the coming years as a result of implementation of the plan of action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The conclusion to be drawn from the Secretary-General's report was that there was no justification for any further reduction of resources at the current stage.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

42. Decolonization activities were, moreover, a Charter responsibility of the Organization, and it was thus hard to understand why they were consistently assigned low priority. The question of Palau was receiving support from several important delegations in the Trusteeship Council but it should not be forgotten that there were 18 Non-Self-Governing Territories in all. The responsibility of the United Nations in that respect would not end until the last such Territory exercised its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. For those reasons, his delegation hoped that the Fifth Committee would recommend adoption of the Secretary-General's revised estimates under section 6.

43. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that, as a former colony, his country supported the process of decolonization and the aspirations of all Non-Self-Governing Territories which truly sought independence. However, it felt that the resource allocation of more than $9 million for the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship was still relatively high, and in fact represented only a fraction of what the United Nations was spending on activities related to decolonization. The question of resource levels should be viewed in the broader context of the commitment to independence in Namibia and the current activities in Western Sahara, as well as from the perspective of the substantial costs Member States were asked to bear outside the regular budget of the United Nations.

44. Attention should, furthermore, be drawn to the observation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of its report (A/46/7/Add.13) that the staff of the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship might not all be fully occupied. The Advisory Committee also noted, in paragraph 14 of its report, that the 12 remaining staff members from the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia were still awaiting placement within the Secretariat. His delegation sought clarification in regard to that underutilization of human resources and would also propose abolition of the currently vacant D-2 post in the Division for Decolonization and Trusteeship, on which the Advisory Committee had made no recommendation, despite having questioned in its report (para. 13) whether the post was essential in that Division. Lastly, he wished to point out that the CPC request for revised estimates under section 6 had been endorsed by that Committee as a whole and not just by a few delegations. The aim was to strengthen the special emergency programmes, to which his country had recently made an additional contribution of $200,000.

45. The CHAIRMAN said he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on section 6, as contained in paragraphs 115 to 118 of its report (A/46/16).

46. It was so decided.

47. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of $9,484,400 under section 6 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 was approved in first reading on the understanding that the issues raised in connection with section 6 would be considered in informal consultations and any necessary adjustments made.

Status of technological innovations in the United Nations (A/46/7/Add.12; A/C.5/46/1 and Corr.1)

48. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said his delegation regretted that the important issue of the application of new technologies was being discussed at such a late stage, particularly in view of the very substantial investments the Secretariat had already undertaken or was in the process of considering. Nevertheless, it appreciated the excellent report of the Advisory Committee and was confident that its recommendations would prevent the Secretariat from engaging in poorly planned expenditure of funds provided by Member States. To ensure that those recommendations were strictly implemented, his delegation proposed that the Fifth Committee's decision on the agenda item under consideration should specifically require the Secretary-General to address all of the issues raised by the Advisory Committee in his next report.

49. Regarding computerization, his delegation agreed with the views of the Advisory Committee, which in its report (A/46/7/Add.12, paras. 3-5) questioned the Secretariat's policy of seeking to place a computer on the desk of each staff member (excluding trades and crafts and security staff). The allocation of computers should be based on actual operational needs. In that regard, it was instructive to note the recent experience of the United Nations Population Fund, where it had been found that some staff members, for cultural or status reasons, were not making use of the computers provided to them. His delegation also agreed with the Advisory Committee that the unit cost for microcomputers used by the Secretariat for budgeting purposes was too high and it hoped that less expensive models would be purchased in the future.

Status of telecommunications activities in the United Nations (A/46/7/Add.12; A/C.5/46/5)

50. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation was concerned at the information contained in the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7/Add.12, para. 12) that the startup costs of the telecommunications network project for the common system would have to be borne by the United Nations alone. The Secretary-General should ensure that formal agreements were reached with the specialized agencies providing for reimbursement to the Organization of their share of the investment costs. His delegation agreed with the view expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 13 of its report that operational arrangements for implementation of a common carrier system needed to be further developed together with cost estimates and a plan of financing.

Integrated management information system project (A/46/7/Add.12; A/C.5/46/24)

51. Mr. LINDFORS (Sweden) welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the integrated management information system (IMIS) project (A/C.5/46/24). His delegation noted with satisfaction that future users of IMIS had been closely involved in drawing up the blueprints of the system and that all potential users were in favour of the approach taken in its external design. It was likewise pleased to note that the project group had established close cooperation with the Internal Audit Division and it was encouraged that other United Nations organizations had expressed interest in the effective use of IMIS, which would in particular facilitate the development of common standards of accounting. His delegation concurred with the comments made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 20 of its report (A/46/7/Add.12) and felt that consideration should be given to charging a fair share of the development costs to other user organizations, which should also be invited to share future maintenance costs. It therefore proposed that usage fees be introduced for other United Nations organizations wishing to use the system.

52. The information in the Secretary-General's report could, however, have been more explicit with regard to the total costs of phase I of the system. It was important for Member States to be given an up-to-date estimate of projected total costs, together with an indication whether any major deviations from previous estimates were anticipated. His delegation therefore looked forward to the report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session regarding the estimated expenditures for IMIS and in that connection assumed that the original cost estimates from 1988 for phase I of the project would not be exceeded.

53. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) agreed with the representative of Sweden that the costs of IMIS should be shared with other agencies. It appeared, furthermore, that the total costs of phase I might well exceed $28 million (at 1988 rates), but no revised estimate was yet available. He therefore requested information from the Secretariat concerning the financial status of the project and as to whether any substantial increase in costs could be expected. His delegation was also very concerned that after three years the Secretariat had still not identified what internal administrative systems could be abolished once IMIS was in place. That was unsettling as it suggested that IMIS might not have been justified at all. The Secretariat should provide information as soon as possible on potential staff savings and utilization of the system.

54. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation supported the introduction of new technology on condition that the cost was offset by prompt savings in staff costs. His delegation had earlier requested a cost-benefit analysis of the introduction of the integrated management information system, which had so far failed to materialize. Accordingly, he again requested the Secretariat to provide such an analysis.

(Mr. Kinchen, United Kingdom)

55. Commenting on the third progress report of the Secretary-General on IMIS (A/C.5/46/24), he asked what number of staff currently working on data-entry posts already identified for abolition could be redeployed (para. 55) and what cost savings would ensue.

56. IMIS was a mammoth project which had encountered significant difficulties and delays. Indeed, further slippage had occurred between the preparation of section 33.A and the issuance of the third progress report. There seemed little doubt that the whole project was a financial flop, and his delegation would like the Secretariat to inform the Committee of the cost of terminating IMIS forthwith. He failed to see why, when it was clear that the project was going badly wrong, it had not already been stopped, and why the Secretariat had been unable to quantify the supposed benefits of the system. The Committee would note that IMIS had never been part of any agreement in any intergovernmental body as part of the measures taken to improve efficiency, but had been launched on the initiative of the Secretariat.

57. Many delegations had reservations with regard to the project, and at a time when the Organization was once again facing financial difficulties the funding of the project raised serious doubts, in particular concerning the manner in which charges had been made against the peace-keeping account. The Fifth Committee should recommend termination of the project.

58. Mr. MORDACQ (France) noted that the third progress report on IMIS indicated that the system would first be implemented in English, and that another official language could be provided if funds were available. He wished to know whether it was the Secretariat's intention to establish the system in English only; such a decision would be regretted by his delegation.

Optical disk storage and retrieval system (A/46/7/Add.12 and A/46/88 and Corr.1; A/C.5/45/58 and A/C.5/46/26)

59. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that it was not acceptable that the costs of the optical disk project would not be known until the project had been completed at Headquarters and Geneva in 1992. The Advisory Committee had observed that there was a lack of interest on the part of missions in using optical disk terminals, given which there was certainly no reason for the Organization to pay for such terminals. With regard to the number of terminals planned, he wished to know whether it was intended to provide one for each staff member, as was the stated intent with regard to personal computers.

60. The Advisory Committee had noted that the maintenance costs of the project might be understated and that only a limited warranty was being provided, which meant that there was a potential for large increases unless the Organization could conclude an appropriate agreement with the contractor. He was not convinced that that would actually be done.

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

61. He took note of the Advisory Committee's comment that the investment return on the project would be minor until 1995 and that the long-term benefits were uncertain, and agreed with the Advisory Committee that further implementation of the project in 1994-1995 should be delayed pending assessment of phase I. While his delegation supported the optical disk project in principle, the lack of clear financial benefits suggested that it should be reconsidered given the Organization's financial difficulties.

62. Lastly, his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's view that one comprehensive report on technological innovations in the United Nations should be provided, and that it should address all the concerns raised and recommendations made by the Advisory Committee. In particular, he trusted that an effort would be made to ensure that all new technologies were fully integrated.

63. Mr. MORDACQ (France) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the optical disk project was inaccurate, since it stated that implementation of phase I had already begun, which was not the case. His delegation could not countenance the taking of any decision on the basis of a report containing such inaccuracies. It was obviously important for reports to be accurate.

64. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the optical disk project. He asked what had happened to the cost-benefit analysis of the project requested by the Assembly at the forty-fourth session, whether a process of international competitive bidding had been followed, and whether alternative suppliers were available. It appeared from the Advisory Committee's report that the full costs of the system had been understated, and, from the comments regarding transmission and printing speeds, that the optical disk project could not possibly replace the current system for the printing and distribution of documents. His delegation was concerned over the cost of establishing retrieval workstations and of acquiring software licences.

65. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that his delegation was perturbed by the statement made by the representative of France. If those assertions were correct, the General Assembly should take appropriate action.

66. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would defer taking a decision on the items before it so as to allow time for the Secretariat to respond to the somewhat technical questions raised.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
48th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 10 December 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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91-57824 5505S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/46/SR.48
16 December 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 106: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991

Standards of accommodation for air travel (A/46/748; A/C.5/46/3 and Add.1 and Add.2)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General had proposed certain modifications to the procedures governing travel arrangements. The Advisory Committee recommended that any decision should be deferred and that the Secretary-General should be requested to submit a report to the General Assembly which would evaluate the current system with a view to determining whether any adjustments were needed to eliminate inconsistencies. A new system that met the objectives of the General Assembly and would be applied fairly throughout the United Nations could then be introduced. In his evaluation the Secretary-General should take account of the procedures followed in the specialized agencies.

2. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) asked why the exceptions to the provisions governing travel shown in annex III of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/46/3) included business-class travel for participants in a study conducted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and whether all participants had been authorized to travel in business class. With regard to annex IV, which listed exceptions authorized for arduous journeys, his delegation questioned the authorization of business-class travel for journeys between Paris and Washington and London and Washington. His delegation was also concerned by some elements in the report concerning upgraded travel arrangements for Secretariat staff, particularly the indication that the Secretariat had difficulties in taking advantage of bonuses granted by airlines. If bonuses were retained by staff members individually, it would be of interest to know whether the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) took what was a substantial benefit into account in calculating the margin.

3. The report had referred to the diminishing level of service in economy class and had proposed the use of business class for flights of more than five hours. Most United States officials, however, travelled with the masses, and he suggested that United Nations staff might do likewise. Regarding the statement by medical directors of the common system regarding the health implications of travel on long flights in economy class, any staff member with medical problems should be granted an exception. The United States did not agree, however, to any redefinition of the nine-hour rule. His delegation was also concerned that the authorization of exceptions in the case of voluntary programmes would divert funds away from the actual programmes. Finally, he wished to know whether the cash refunds of $800,000 mentioned in the report had been reported to the General Assembly; such funds ought to be returned to Member States rather than be used to upgrade staff travel arrangements.

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

4. The Advisory Committee had not accepted the Secretary-General's proposals but had recommended that further study should be undertaken. Care should be taken to ensure that any action taken at the forty-seventh session resulted in additional savings for the Organization rather than an increase in travel costs. The views contained in paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/748) should be reflected in the Fifth Committee's decision.

5. Mr. RAE (India) said that the Secretary-General's reports provided information on travel expenditures but not on subsistence allowances. There was little consistency in the way subsistence allowances were allocated to delegates attending meetings of subsidiary organs, as exemplified by the fact that delegates to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) received the standard allowance plus 15 per cent, whereas delegates attending meetings of other organs received an additional 40 per cent. The Secretary-General should address that inconsistency.

6. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) endorsed the criticism made by the representative of the United States of America of proposals relating to upgraded travel arrangements. The comments by the medical directors of the common system concerning the health implications of travel on long flights in economy class were shameful and untrue: many people flew on long economy-class flights without any health risk whatsoever. The statement that lengthy check-in procedures were the norm was also false. Lastly, the Organization should make more use of APEX flights in the interest of good management.

7. Ms. MILLS (Deputy Controller) said that the participants in the ESCAP study had been authorized to travel in business class on the grounds of their eminence. The two instances of business-class travel between Europe and the United States of America had been authorized for segments of longer journeys. Regarding tne $800,000 received in cash refunds from airlines, such amounts were credited to miscellaneous income (A/C.5/46/3/Add.2, para. 10) and thus served to reduce the assessed contributions of Member States. Lastly, the difficulty in taking advantage of bonus miles lay not in the Organization's management but, rather, in the limitations imposed by airlines on the use of such bonuses.

8. The CHAIRMAN said he would take it that the Fifth Committee, on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/C.5/46/3 and Add.1 and Add.2; that it should endorse the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee as contained in document A/46/748; and that it should request the Secretary-General to submit a review/evaluation of the current system together with specific proposals to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

9. It was so decided.

10. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said he trusted that adoption of the decision would lead to savings for the Organization and not to an increase in costs.

11. Mr. RAE (India) noted that his delegation's concerns were not reflected in the decision. His delegation would, however, endorse the decision on the understanding that the matter would be taken up again at the Committee's resumed session.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Self-evaluation capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa (A/C.5/46/37)

12. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that General Assembly resolution 44/201 B had requested the Secretary-General to review the question of resources for the evaluation function in the regional commissions prior to the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, and had decided that the post of Chief, Office Automation, at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) should be an established post at the P-5 level for the biennium 1990-1991 and that the post of evaluation officer, also at the P-5 level, should be restored on a non-recurrent basis, subject to renewal, in the context of the biennium 1992-1993. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General had submitted a note on the self-evaluation capacity of ECA (A/C.5/46/37). That document contained confusing statements regarding the P-5 evaluation officer post. According to paragraph 9, the post was currently vacant, although that was not the Advisory Committee's understanding. Nor was there any indication that the post had been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. Retention of the post would thus require a specific decision by the General Assembly.

13. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) agreed that the Secretary-General's note (A/C.5/46/37) was confusing. Moreover, it did not meet the requests made by the General Assembly in resolution 44/201 B. The Secretary-General had merely described existing arrangements. What was clear, however, was that the P-5 evaluation officer post at ECA had been created by the General Assembly; consequently, the Secretary-General was not in a position to eliminate it.

14. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should recommend that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to submit a report on the matter, through CPC, to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session in order to enable the Assembly to take a decision on it at that session.

15. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) said it was his understanding that the Chairman of ACABQ had said that the P-5 evaluation officer post must be retained, as it had been created by the General Assembly in resolution 44/201 B. He sought confirmation of that point, as he did not want the Committee's decision to result in the abolition of that post.

16. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that the Fifth Committee should not allow itself to be used to terminate a position created by the General Assembly. Taking the mandate of resolution 44/201 B fully into account, the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that the evaluation officer post should be retained during the 1992-1993 biennium and that any subsequent studies of the self-evaluation capacity of ECA should be conducted without prejudice to that post.

17. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) endorsed the suggestion made by the representative of Uganda.

18. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that any decision by the Fifth Committee to reinstate the P-5 post would be in line with the recommendations of the Chairman of ACABQ but would require an additional appropriation from the contingency fund under the proposed programme budget.

19. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that the matter of an additional appropriation should be considered in the informal consultations on section 23 of the proposed programme budget.

20. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in its recommendation to the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee might simply state that it endorsed the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations

21. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) said that before sending the matter to informal consultations, it should be clarified as much as possible. While the General Assembly had established the evaluation officer post, albeit on a temporary basis, the Programme Planning and Budget Division maintained that it no longer existed. He wondered how such a thing could happen. Moreover, while the General Assembly had asked the Secretary-General to increase the evaluation capacity of ECA, the Secretary-General, in suppressing that post, had done just the opposite. Informal consultations were not needed; the Secretary-General should simply respect the wishes of the General Assembly and reinstate the post.

22, Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) said that the Fifth Committee was empowered to take decisions having an impact on budgetary levels without holding informal consultations, and it should do so in the current situation. The evaluation officer post had been created as a temporary post, but no deadline for its elimination had been set. The Secretary-General, for his part, might have recommended the elimination of the P-5 post to the Fifth Committee, but he should not have eliminated it outright, for that would represent a falling away from the commitment to evaluation.

23. He therefore proposed that the Fifth Committee should, on the basis of the Secretary-General's note and the observations of ACABQ, recommend that the General Assembly should decide: to maintain the P-5 post for self-evaluation at ECA in the context of the 1992-1993 programme budget; to request the

(Mr. Dankwa, Ghana)

Secretary-General to appoint a qualified candidate to the post to allow for a resumption of self-evaluation at ECA; and to request the Secretary-General to endeavour to complete his review, in accordance with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 36/228 on the strengthening of the United Nations evaluation systems, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session through the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

24. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) welcomed the proposal by the representative of Ghana but suggested that the Committee should defer a decision on the matter.

25. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that his delegation had serious reservations about holding informal consultations. Resources should be appropriated in accordance with the directives of the General Assembly, one of which had created the P-5 post under discussion. Unless the Secretariat could find a legislative mandate for terminating it, his delegation could not agree to informal consultations. Moreover, deferring the question of strengthening self-evaluation capacity at ECA, which had been raised as long ago as the thirty-eighth session, was not in accordance with existing mandates.

26. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the General Assembly was a sovereign body. Nevertheless, if it decided to reinstate the post, there would be financial implications which he was required to draw to the Committee's attention.

27. As for the requisite legislative mandate, the Secretary-General was fully entitled to recommend the creation or abolition of posts. He had also been given a mandate to implement self-evaluation within the Organization, and to that end had been asked to create a renewable temporary post at ECA. For the biennium 1992-1993 the Secretary-General had simply proposed that a decision regarding that post should be deferred for a year, pending further study. However, the General Assembly did not have to accept that proposal.

28. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) welcomed the remarks by the representative of Canada and the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division. He reiterated that the P-5 post should be retained, in accordance with resolution 44/201 B, and suggested that other studies should be carried out to explore the possibility of applying similar self-evaluation arrangements to other regional commissions.

29. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) expressed support for the Chairman's suggestion as further elaborated by the representative of Ghana. If the Secretary-General wanted to abolish the post, he could submit a proposal to that end to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. At that time the Secretary-General might also submit a report on self-evaluation in all the regional commissions, including ECA.

30. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said he thought that the matter should be discussed in informal consultations.

31. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said he did not think it was necessary to hold consultations on the maintenance of the evaluation officer post, the importance of which had been stressed by previous speakers. He suggested that a reference to the Committee's endorsement of the recommendations of CPC might be included in the Chairman's proposal.

32. Mrs. CLIFF (United Kingdom) shared the view that the question should be considered further in informal consultations and added that her delegation would have difficulty agreeing to the proposal made by the representative of Ghana. She also sought clarification as to whether the Secretary-General was in fact proposing a new post. It was her understanding, which she wished to have confirmed, that the Committee could take a decision immediately only on the basis of savings realized under section 23.

33. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) said that he would agree to informal consultations in the interests of flexibility, but only on the question of strengthening the self-evaluation capacity of ECA and the other regional commissions. If the Committee insisted on discussing the specific P-5 post informally, he wished to have all similar posts referred to informal consultations as well.

34. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) supported the Ghanaian proposal, which was objective and balanced and allowed the Committee to maintain the principle that the General Assembly had a legislative mandate to create posts.

35. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to the question raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that it had been the decision of the General Assembly to create the post on a non-recurring basis; the post was therefore listed in a footnote to staffing table 23.5. The cost of the post was approximately $270,000 for the biennium.

36. The CHAIRMAN suggested that further discussion of the item should be postponed to a later meeting.

37. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 18: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

(a) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS (A/46/101 and A/C.5/46/51)

38. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/46/101, in which the Secretary-General had indicated that, owing to the expiration of the terms of office of five members of ACABQ on 31 December 1991, the General Assembly would have to appoint five persons to fill the resulting vacancies. Document

(The Chairman)

A/C.5/46/51 contained the names and curricula vitae of the candidates nominated by their respective Governments.

39. Mr. PANOV (Bulgaria) pointed out that, owing to an error, the name and curriculum vitae of one of the three candidates nominated by the group of Eastern European States for membership on ACABQ had been omitted from document A/C.5/46/51.

40. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in view of the error just pointed out by the representative of Bulgaria and the fact that there were three candidates for one vacancy for the group of Eastern European States, the Committee should elect one candidate from that group by secret ballot at its next meeting.

41. It was so decided.

42. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, since the number of candidates from the African, Asian and Latin American and Caribbean groups corresponded to the number of vacancies available for those groups, the Committee should elect four members from those regional groups by acclamation. Accordingly, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend the appointment of Mr. Ahmad Fathi Al-Masri (Syrian Arab Republic), Mr. Kwaku Dua Dankwa (Ghana), Mr. E. Besley Maycock (Barbados) and Mr. C. S. M. Mselle (United Republic of Tanzania) to the Advisory Committee for three-year terms of office beginning on 1 January 1992 by acclamation.

43. It was so decided.

(d) CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE (A/46/104 and Add.1, A/C.5/46/27)

44. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/46/104/Add.1, in which the Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly of the death of Mr. George Johnston of the United States of America and of the need to appoint one person to fill the unexpired portion of Mr. Johnston's term of office, i.e. until 31 December 1993. In document A/46/104, the Secretary-General had drawn the Assembly's attention to article 20 of the regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and to the need for the General Assembly to confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of three persons to fill other vacancies on the Investments Committee.

45. In document A/C.5/46/27, the Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly of the nomination by the Government of the United States of America of Ms. Francine Bovich to fill the unexpired portion of Mr. Johnston's term of office, and had presented to the Assembly for confirmation the appointment to the Investments Committee of Mr. Ahmad Abdullatif (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Aloysio de Andrade Faria (Brazil) and Mr. Stanislaw Raczkowski (Poland) for three-year terms of office, beginning on 1 January 1992. If he heard no

(The Chairman)

objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee wished to recommend confirmation of those appointments.

46. It was so decided.

The meeting was suspended at 5.15 p.m. and was resumed at 5.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Status of technical innovations in the United Nations (continued) (A/C.5/46/1 and Corr.1 and A/46/7/Add.12)

Status of telecommunications activities in the United Nations (continued) (A/C.5/46/5 and A/46/7/Add.12)

Integrated management information system project (continued) (A/C.5/46/24 and A/46/7/Add.12)

Optical disk storage and retrieval system (continued) (A/C.5/45/58, A/C.5/46/26 and A/46/7/Add.12, A/46/88 and Corr.1)

47. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to questions raised at an earlier meeting, said it was expected that the financing of the optical disk storage and retrieval system, would require the full amount allocated but no more. The true cost of the system, however, would not be known until the contracts required to complete it had been received. The budget for the project had not included provision for translation into languages other than English; the estimated cost of translation into one other language, which could be done after the system had been fully tested, was $350,000. It was impossible to make an accurate estimate of the savings that might be realized through the non-implementation of projects superseded by the integrated management information system (IMIS), but it was believed that they would amount to several million dollars. Nor was it possible to estimate how many posts would be eliminated through the implementation of the system until after it was in place. The new system would certainly improve the efficiency of the Organization, but that did not always mean the elimination of posts.

48. With respect to a cost-benefit analysis, he could only repeat that the difficulties involved in undertaking such an analysis were great; however, more information would be provided to the Committee after the completion of the workflow analysis in 1992. With respect to the cost of terminating the project at the present stage, he said that the $9.4 million spent on the project as of 31 October 1991 would be lost. In addition, approximately $100,000 would be required to terminate the staff currently engaged in the project and $800,000 would be needed to terminate the major contracts recently agreed to. The Secretariat remained confident that the project was developing well, and great interest in it had been expressed by other organizations of the United Nations system. The Secretariat also believed that its

(Mr. Baudot)

implementation would enhance the Organization's efficiency and could be carried out on the basis of the present plan.

49. The Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/46/26) had correctly described the status of the project at the time the report had been prepared. The project was proceeding in accordance with the schedule indicated in the report, and the final system would be fully operational at the end of the first quarter or the beginning of the second quarter of 1992. With respect to maintenance costs, the supervisory committee for the project had recommended acceptance of the proposal submitted by the contractor, which would now be incorporated into the final contract.

50. In summary, the initial contract currently being negotiated with the contractor covered installation and acceptance of the hardware for phase I of the system, which would be installed in Geneva and New York by January 1992. Full installation of the system would be completed by the end of February, and it was anticipated that the system would be fully operational by the end of the second quarter of 1992.

51. A questionnaire had been sent to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York and 35 per cent of them had responded, all expressing interest in participating in the system. The Secretary-General did not propose to provide missions with terminals; the information in paragraph 22 of his report was intended merely as a guide to the cost of acquiring a computer, or of adapting an existing one, to serve as a retrieval station. Within the Secretariat, the policy was definitely not to place a terminal on the desk of every staff member. What was involved was the upgrading of workstations installed for other uses rather than the acquisition of workstations exclusively for optical disk storage and retrieval. As to whether the maintenance costs of the optical disk system had been understated, the Secretary-General's report if anything overstated the costs of maintaining the system once it was well established. The cost was likely to be less than 10 per cent of the total value of the equipment.

52. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) commended the members of the Technological Innovations Board on their efforts to ensure greater efficiency and rational use of resources in the United Nations. In their endeavours, the Board and its subsidiary organs should, however, bear in mind a number of important considerations. First and foremost, the credibility of the Secretary-General must not be undermined in any way - for example, by claiming that implementation of phase I of the optical disk project had begun when, as pointed out by the representative of France, that was not yet the case.

53. In addition, with several technological projects under way it was essential, as the Advisory Committee had indicated, that all units involved should coordinate their activities and harmonize their use of technologies in order to prevent any future incompatibility problems. Work should proceed on the basis of an information technology strategy suited to the carefully projected needs of the United Nations system. Furthermore, it should not be

(Mr. Tommo Monthe, Cameroon)

forgotten that innovations had been approved by Member States in the firm belief that they would not only be applied at Headquarters but extended to the regional commissions and field offices.

54. Speedy execution of projects was vital, as any delay could cause difficulties. Expenditures must be kept within reasonable limits and cost comparisons should be made to ensure that Member States continued to finance technological innovations in the knowledge that they stood to gain and were not simply allowing some countries to develop their markets. Lastly, the Secretariat should monitor project execution strictly and submit a comprehensive report on all technological projects that was coherent, pertinent and credible.

55. Mrs. CLIFF (United Kingdom) thanked the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division for his detailed answers, especially those concerning the cost of IMIS. Under the circumstances, and in the light of those replies, she wished to propose that the Fifth Committee should take a decision to abandon the IMIS project. However, her delegation was ready to consider the matter in informal consultations if other delegations so desired.

56. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) likewise welcomed the information provided and hoped that it would be made available in written form so that delegations could evaluate the status of the various projects more easily. His delegation supported the concept of the optical disk storage and retrieval system but still had doubts about the way in which the project was being implemented. Also, it appeared from the Advisory Committee's report (A/46/7/Add.12, para. 37) that the maintenance costs of the system had been understated by the Secretariat, an observation that was at variance with the information provided by the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division. Those matters should be discussed further in informal consultations. Lastly, his delegation shared the concerns voiced by the representative of the United Kingdom regarding the IMIS project and supported the proposal that it should be terminated.

57. Mr. MORDACQ (France), referring to his statement at the previous meeting concerning the inaccurate information given in the Secretary-General's report on the optical disk system (A/C.5/46/26), said the replies received from the Secretariat indicated that some progress had been made on the project since the issuance of the report on 29 October 1991. The Advisory Committee had made some judicious recommendations in its report regarding the need to keep the project costs under control (A/46/7/Add.12, paras. 41 and 42), particularly in calling for a detailed performance report on the completion of phase I before phase II was begun. Proposals might also be considered with a view to meeting the requirements partly from the regular budget and partly from peace-keeping operations and extrabudgetary activities. In addition, operating and maintenance costs would have to be closely monitored. His delegation took a flexible position on the matter and hoped that the Committee would be able to accept the proposals of the Secretary-General together with the recommendations of ACABQ.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
49th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 11 December 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 49th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Programme budget implications of draft resolutions A/46/L.33, A/46/L.34 and A/46/L.35 concerning agenda item 33

AGENDA ITEM 18: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (continued)

(a) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS

(c) APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS

(e) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL

(f) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS STAFF PENSION COMMITTEE

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13 December 1991

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolutions A/46/L.33, A/46/L.34 and A/46/L.35 concerning agenda item 33

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the programme budget implications of draft resolutions A/46/L.33, A/46/L.34 and A/46/L.35 concerning the question of Palestine were outlined in document A/C.5/46/59. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had informed him that ACABQ had considered the matter and that no additional appropriation would be required as a result of the adoption of the draft resolutions.

2. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana), Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, said that pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A and the procedures adopted by the Committee on Conferences, members had been informed that the proposed programme of work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for 1992-1993 included a total of 20 events, 15 of which would be held away from New York, the established headquarters of the Committee's substantive secretariat, the Division for Palestinian Rights. That, therefore, represented a departure from section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 40/243, which stated that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective headquarters.

3. On the basis of the information provided, the Committee on Conferences recommended that the General Assembly should make an exception to section I, paragraph 4, of resolution 40/243, thereby authorizing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to meet away from its established headquarters. The Committee on Conferences also noted that the Secretariat would endeavour to combine events, which could produce savings, and wished to encourage the Division and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to seek every opportunity to maximize savings, including efforts to secure, to the extent possible, invitations and agreements from host Governments in accordance with section I, paragraph 5, of resolution 40/243 to defray the actual additional costs directly or indirectly involved.

4. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolutions A/46/L.33, A/46/L.34 and A/46/L.35, the activities outlined in section C of the Secretary-General's statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/46/59) were covered by sections 4 and 31 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 and no modifications would be required; that no additional appropriations would be required under sections 4, 31 or 32 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993; and that an exception would have to be authorized

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to resolution 40/243 in respect of those meetings detailed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's statement.

5. It was so decided.

6. Mr. COHEN (United States of America), speaking in explanation of position after the decision, said that the expenditure which the draft resolutions would entail would in no way contribute to the peace process in the region.

AGENDA ITEM 18: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (continued)

(a) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS (continued) (A/46/101; A/C.5/46/51 and Add.1)

7. The CHAIRMAN suggested that since the curriculum vitae of one of the candidates for the remaining vacancy for the Group of Eastern European States had just been circulated, the Committee should postpone the election to fill the vacancy for that Group until its next formal meeting.

8. It was so decided.

(b) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (A/46/102; A/C.5/46/52)

9. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to rules 158 and 159 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The General Assembly was required to appoint six persons to fill vacancies which would arise in the membership of the Committee on Contributions with the expiry of the terms of office of six of its members on 31 December 1991. In document A/C.5/46/52, the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly that six persons had been nominated by their respective Governments for appointment or reappointment. The number of candidates corresponded to the number of vacancies to be filled. Accordingly, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend by acclamation the appointment of Mr. Akimoto (Japan), Mr. Etuket (Uganda), Mr. Fox (United States of America), Mr. Gorita (Romania), Mr. Karbuczky (Hungary), and Mr. Menon (Singapore) to membership of the Committee on Contributions for three-year terms of office beginning on 1 January 1992.

10. It was do decided.

(c) APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS (A/46/103; A/C.5/46/53)

11. The CHAIRMAN said that in document A/46/103, the Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly of the necessity to appoint the Auditor General (or officer holding the equivalent title) of a Member State to fill the vacancy that would arise on 1 July 1992 in the membership of the United Nations Board of Auditors. In document A/C.5/46/53, the Secretary-General had

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informed the Committee that the Government of the United Kingdom had nominated the Comptroller and Auditor General of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for appointment to the United Nations Board of Auditors for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 July 1992. Since there was only one candidate for the vacancy, he would take it that the Committee wished to dispense with the secret ballot.

12. It was so decided.

13. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend by acclamation the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Board of Auditors for a term of office beginning on 1 July 1992 and ending on 30 June 1995.

14. It was so decided.

(e) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (A/46/105; A/C.5/46/54)

15. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the General Assembly was required to appoint three persons to fill vacancies that would arise in membership of the Administrative Tribunal on 31 December 1991. The Secretary-General had indicated that Mr. Leliel (Zaire), Mr. Sen (India) and Mr. Thierry (France) had been nominated by their respective Governments for appointment or reappointment. Since the number of candidates corresponded to the number of vacancies, he would take it that the Committee wished to dispense with the secret ballot.

16. It was so decided.

17. The CHAIRMAN, said that he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend the appointment of those candidates for three-year terms of office beginning on 1 January 1992.

18. It was so decided.

(f) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS STAFF PENSION COMMITTEE (A/46/106; A/C.5/46/55 and Add.1)

19. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, since the documentation for the appointment of members and alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee was not complete, the Committee should postpone a decision on that matter until its next meeting.

20. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.